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ABSTRACT

The Northeast Campus of Tarrant County Junior College (TX) experienced a foreign language enrollment increase of 196% between 1973 and 1983, compared to a collegewide enrollment increase of only 91%. The program's success is due largely to the number and variety of curricular offerings. In addition to a 6-course sequence of 3- and 4-hour courses in French, Spanish, and German, a variety of 1-hour courses at 5 levels of difficulty have been introduced to meet students' curricular needs and preferences. These include such courses as "Paris for Travelers," "History of Nazi Germany," "Spain after Franco," "French Cooking," "Personal Correspondence in French," "German for Travelers," "Barrio Spanish," literature courses, grammar, listening and reading comprehension, composition, and linguistics. Some have traditional scheduled meetings, and others are supervised by a tutor in the language laboratory. Prerequisites vary from none to a bachelors degree. Students may select any number and combination of the courses as elective hours to supplement language study, gaining more control over their programs, correcting weaknesses, and adding emphasis in areas of special interest. (MSE)

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ABSTRACT

A FLEXIBLE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CURRICULUM FOR DEPARTMENTAL GROWTH AND PROGRAM EXCELLENCE: A REPORT FROM AN EXEMPLARY PROGRAM

Presented at
Southwest Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
Colorado Congress of Foreign Language Educators
Colorado Springs, Colorado
March 3, 1984

The Department of Foreign Languages on Northeast Campus of Tarrant County Junior College has experienced tremendous growth since the early 1970's. During the ten years between 1973 and 1983, the enrollment of the department increased 196 per cent; enrollment in the French section increased 208 per cent; campus enrollment increased 91 per cent, using fall figures. Using spring statistics, foreign language enrollment increased by 302 per cent between 1974 and 1984. There are currently 1367 credit enrollments.

Much of the success of the foreign language program, as measured by numbers of student enrollments, is due to the number and variety of curricular offerings. In addition to a six-course sequence of three- and four-hour courses in French, German, and Spanish, a variety of one-hour courses at five levels of difficulty have been developed to meet the curricular needs and preferences of students.

There are variations in content and purpose of the courses. For example, courses in conversation, grammar, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, composition, and linguistics facilitate specific language skill development. Courses such as Paris for Travelers, History of Nazi Germany, Spain after Franco, and French Cooking primarily promote cultural understanding. Some, such as Personal Correspondence in French, German for Travelers, Barrio Spanish, and literature courses, do both.

There are variations in the type of instruction. Students meet in required, scheduled classes for such courses as conversation, travel, history, linguistics, advanced grammar, and cooking. However, students taking grammar review, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, or composition work by independent study supervised by a professional tutor in the language lab.

Variations also exist in skill levels. Prerequisites vary from none to a bachelor's degree.

Individual students, with the guidance of the foreign language faculty, may select any number and any combination of these courses as elective hours to supplement and to extend their language study. By their selections students gain control of much of their curriculum, doing developmental work in their areas of weakness and/or adding emphasis to their areas of special interest.

A Flexible Foreign Language Curriculum for Departmental Growth and Program Excellence: A Report from an Exemplary Program

The Department of Foreign Languages on Northeast Campus of Tarrant County Junior College has experienced tremendous growth since the early 1970's. Figure 1 shows the enrollment statistics of the department, with an increase of 196+ per cent from the fall of 1973 to the fall of 1982, the French section of the department with a 208+ per cent increase, and the campus as a whole with a 91+ per cent increase during the last ten years. Obviously, enrollment in credit foreign language courses has grown at a much faster rate than has enrollment in the college, and this growth has occurred during an era of general growth of technical/occupational programs in most community/junior colleges.

The figures for spring, 1984, are even more dramatic. Although campus enrollment is down to 9,982, department enrollment has soared to 1367, an increase of 302 per cent over the ten-year period. Non-credit enrollment is also growing, with 250 enrollments in continuing education courses this semester. Thus, the department total for all offerings is just over 1600.

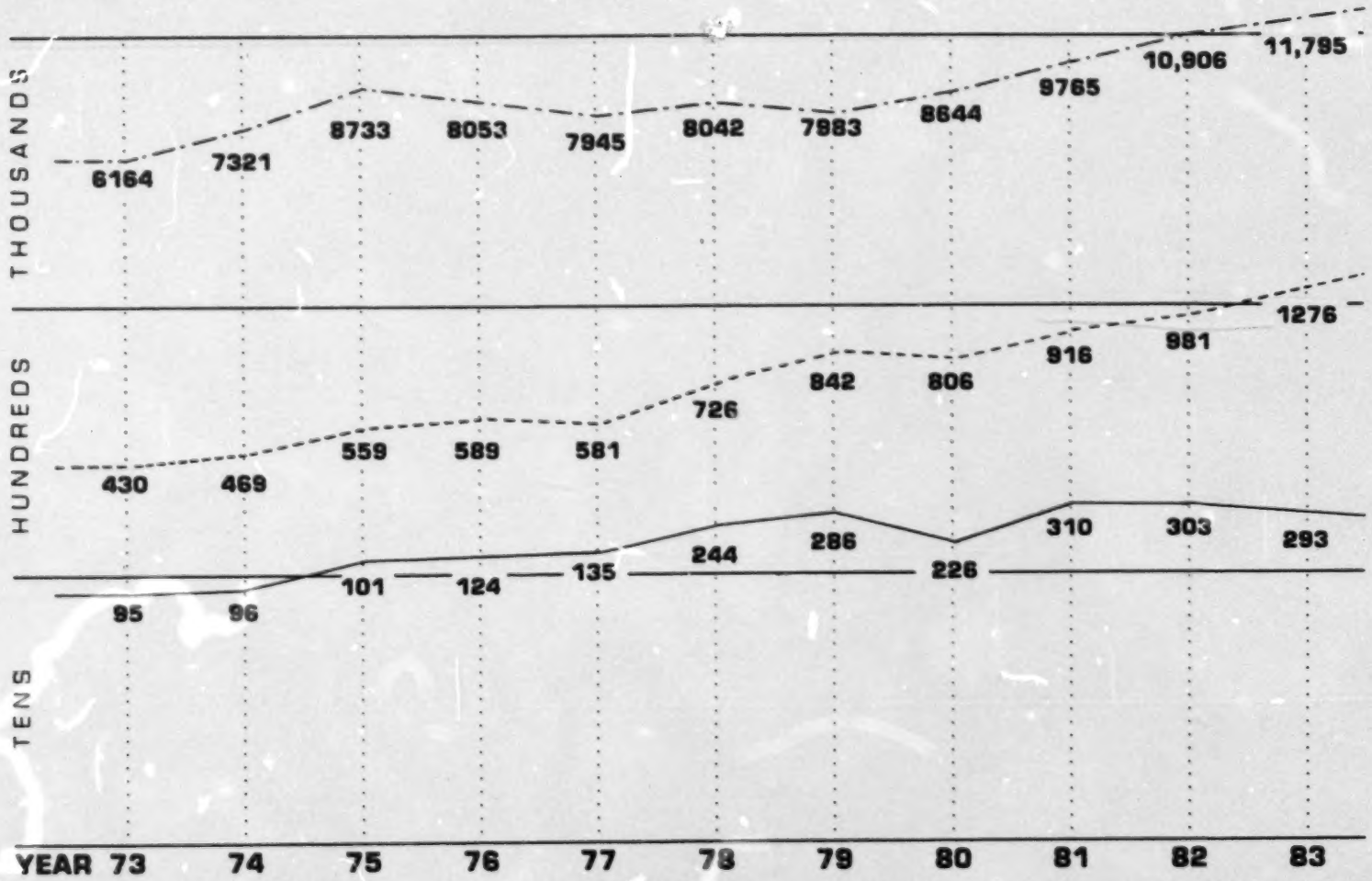
Much of the success of the foreign language program, as measured by numbers of student enrollments, is due to the number and variety of curricular offerings. However, part of this success must also be attributed to the instructional emphases in the department. Curriculum development at its best is an extension of sound instruction. It should never be used as a camouflage for poor instruction.

Beginning in 1970 an individualized instructional system was introduced into the department. The system is not independent study: rather, it is a truly individualized instructional program including classroom interaction, multi-mediated instructional materials, an open laboratory for student practice and testing, a tutoring system, repeatable testing, a computer learning center, and advanced placement with credit through a sequence of courses. Primary emphasis at all levels is on the development of listening comprehension and speaking skills with secondary attention paid to reading and writing.

The course sequence in French, German, and Spanish includes four semesters of language development followed by two semesters of history and civilization. In English for Speakers of Other Languages, added to the department in 1982, the course sequence is comprised of four semesters only.

In addition to these regular sequences of courses are the one-semester-hour courses, the components of the flexible curriculum. These one-hour courses were originally designed under one catalogue number 2611 in each language. However, as the number of titles expanded with student interest in a variety of topics, the department clustered related courses under six catalogue numbers. Administrative fear of possible questions from the Texas Coordinating Board of Colleges and Universities concerning large numbers of students who were repeating a single course number encouraged the change in organization. Furthermore, the department agreed to an administrative directive that no student be permitted to take more than four courses under one number.

FRENCH - NORTHEAST
FOREIGN LANGUAGES - NORTHEAST
TCJC - NORTHEAST



CHANGES IN ENROLLMENT FROM FALL 73 TO FALL 83

—— French - NE + 208.42%
----- Foreign Languages - NE + 196.74%
—·— TCJC - NE + 91.35%

Figure 1

Thirty-five different courses in French have been offered under the one-hour umbrella. There have been twenty-four in German and twenty-two in Spanish. Some course offerings were abandoned under the new numbering system and administrative directive concerning repeated enrollments.

However, the topics most in demand in each language were retained. The offerings, although not identical, are similar in all languages. The French titles are listed as examples:

FRN 1601 - STUDIES IN FRENCH CULTURE
- Paris for Travelers
- France for Travelers
- French Cooking
- Introduction to Language
- Conversation Tutorial

FRN 1611 - FRENCH GRAMMAR
- French Grammar I
- French Grammar II
- French Grammar III
- French Grammar IV

FRN 2601 - CONVERSATION IN FRENCH
- Conversation I
- Conversation II
- Conversation III
- Conversation IV
- Conversation for Teachers

FRN 2611 - PRACTICUM IN FRENCH
- Correspondence
- Special Projects
- Composition
- Laboratory III
- Laboratory IV

FRN 2621 - LISTENING COMPREHENSION
- French Pronunciation
- Listening Comprehension I
- Listening Comprehension II

FRN 2631 - READINGS IN FRENCH
- Introduction to Reading
- Intermediate Reading
- Reading for Comprehension
- Readings in French Literature

The primary differences among the languages are in the culture courses 1601. In German the titles are:
- History of the Weimar Republic
- History of Imperial Germany
- History of Nazi Germany
- German for Travelers

In Spanish the titles are:
Barrio Spanish
Chicano Literature
Mexico for Travelers
Spain after Franco

In English for Speakers of Other Languages, the numbers and titles are quite different:

ESL 1251 - ENGLISH GRAMMAR
Grammar I
Grammar II
Grammar III
Grammar IV

ESL 1261 - CONVERSATION IN ENGLISH
Conversation I
Conversation II
Conversation III
Conversation IV

ESL 1271 - LISTENING COMPREHENSION
Listening Comprehension I
Listening Comprehension II
Listening Comprehension III
Listening Comprehension IV

ESL 1281 - INTRODUCTION TO READING
Reading I
Reading II
Reading III
Reading IV
Option 1 - Humanities, Social Sciences
Option 2 - Natural Sciences

ESL 1291 - INTRODUCTION TO COMPOSITION
Composition I
Composition II
Composition III
Composition IV

ESL 2201 - LANGUAGE PRACTICUM
Laboratory III
Laboratory IV

There are variations in content and purpose of different aspects of the program. For example, courses in conversation, grammar, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, composition, and linguistics facilitate specific language skill development. Courses such as Paris for Travelers, History of Nazi Germany, Spain after Franco, and French Cooking primarily promote cultural understanding. Some such as Personal Correspondence in French, German for Travelers, Barrio Spanish, and literature courses, do both.

In addition, there are variations in the type of instruction demanded by different offerings. For example, students meet in required, scheduled classes with a professor for conversation, travel, history, linguistics, advanced grammar, specialized literature or language, and cooking courses. However, students taking grammar review, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, or composition work by independent study supervised by a professional tutor in the language lab and the computer learning center.

Variations also exist in skill or difficulty levels of the courses. Prerequisites vary from none to a bachelor's degree. Examples of courses with no prerequisites are travel, history, and cooking courses which are taught in English. Courses with two years of study as prerequisite requirements are advanced conversation, advanced grammar, readings in literature, and composition. A few courses have been designed for special populations and, thus, have special requirements for admission, such as conversation for teachers taken primarily by high school faculty from the local area and conversation tutorial for high school seniors in their second or third year of study.

The departmental enrollment has not always grown at a steady, even rate. Rather, it has jumped at irregular intervals. These large changes have occurred in conjunction with the evolution of the one-hour curriculum.

As indicated in Figure 2, the enrollments were small in the early 1970's. The introduction of the first one-hour course in each language in 1973-74 had little effect on the enrollment. The addition of a second option in French in the spring of 1975 was accompanied by a jump to 133 enrollments. However, since students were permitted to sign for only one of the courses at a time, the numbers tended to stabilize rather than to continue to grow.

In 1977-78 the college finally agreed to repeated departmental requests to allow students to enroll concurrently for two or more courses under the one-hour catalogue number. Multiple French courses were developed first: French enrollment spurted to 194 in the spring, 1978, and continued upward to 244 that fall. Multiple Spanish offerings the following spring, 1979, resulted in an enrollment surge to 506. Variety in German offerings by the next fall, 1979, provided the first big increase in those enrollment figures. When ESOL was added in 1982, a one-hour course sequence was designed. As a result, enrollments in ESOL went from 46 in the fall of 1982 to 303 in the fall of 1983.

Continued development of new courses of study resulted in a gradual growth of enrollment. The insistence of the administration on the limitation of enrollment repeats by students after 1982 was perceived by the faculty as a possible threat to the continuation of this growth. However, under the new organization of catalogue numbers, the program is still progressing. There are currently 1367 credit enrollments in foreign languages on Northeast Campus, the largest enrollment ever.

Certainly, most of this enrollment increase is a result of the numbers of students who have signed up for one-hour courses. However, as indicated in Figure 3, the overall increase has been accompanied by an increase of students in the regular three- and four-hour sequence courses.

Department of Foreign Languages

ENROLLMENT

FALL

Students — YEAR	FRENCH	GERMAN	SPANISH	SUB - TOTAL	ESOL	TOTAL
70	94	44	128	266		
71	60	57	145	262		
72	101	58	197	366		
73	95	89	246	430		
74	96	83	290	469		
75	101	105	353	559		
76	124	102	363	589		
77	135	96	350	581		
78	244	81	401	726		
79	286	148	396	842		
80	226	142	438	806		
81	310	157	449	916		
82	303	170	462	935	46	981
83	293	176	504	973	303	1276
84						

SPRING

Students — YEAR						
70						
71	79	32	120	231		
72	65	44	166	275		
73	99	45	196	340		
74	68	68	214	350		
75	133	77	337	547		
76	106	63	356	525		
77	122	58	387	567		
78	194	83	378	655		
79	255	82	506	823		
80	279	154	425	858		
81	262	154	507	923		
82	333	172	478	983		
83	335	174	465	974	70	1044
84	351	151	596	1098	269	1367

Figure 2

Change in enrollment in sequence courses (3 and 4 Hour Courses) since 1973

		73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	% Change
						F A L L							
French	3 & 4 Hour Courses	84	81	89	106	108	147	128	132	129	167	160	+ 90.48%
	1 Hour Courses	11	15	12	18	27	97	158	94	181	136	133	
Dept.	3 & 4 Hour Courses	380	404	519	513	492	516	521	551	562	615	637	+ 67.63%
	1 Hour Courses	50	65	70	76	89	210	321	255	354	320	336	
+ ESOL	3 & 4 Hour Courses										661	732	+ 92.63%
	1 Hour Courses											544	
						S P R I N G							
French	3 & 4 Hour Courses		58	108	92	110	111	105	133	121	164	160	+ 175.86%
	1 Hour Courses		10	25	14	12	83	150	146	141	169	175	
Dept.	3 & 4 Hour Courses		316	462	433	502	498	507	479	575	581	592	+ 87.34%
	1 Hour Courses		34	85	92	65	157	316	379	348	402	382	
+ ESOL	3 & 4 Hour Courses											622	+ 109.49%
	1 Hour Courses												

Figure 3

For example, in the fall of 1973, there were 84 students in regular sequence French courses plus eleven in one hours for a total of 95 students. By fall of 1983, there were 160 in sequence courses plus 133 in one hours for a total of 293. Spring enrollment differences are even larger. In the spring of 1974, only 58 students enrolled for sequence French courses. By spring of 1984 there are 170 plus 182 in one hours, a total of 352. Thus, the one-hour courses have enhanced the growth of sequence courses, not drawn students from them as once feared.

All the one-hour courses are elective. (In fact, since TCJC has no foreign language requirements for entrance or graduation, all language courses are elective.) Students may choose any combination of courses for which they meet the prerequisites.

A number of reasons explain the popularity of the courses among students:

1. Students can design their own curriculum by their choice of courses. For the first time, the system gives the student control of his curriculum. By making choices among courses, a student can place emphasis on one skill or combination of skills.

2. Options are available for slower students and for transfer students with different backgrounds. Therefore, they are, in effect, given extra time and assistance in developing skills. As a result, sometimes the program can keep students who might otherwise drop out of their language study.

3. More advanced or demanding courses function as a type of honors curriculum, permitting students to learn at a faster rate and/or a greater level of difficulty or detail.

4. There are additional courses for students to take after they complete the regular sequence. Students may stay at TCJC for five or more years, taking courses in a single language, developing real language proficiency.

5. Some courses are offered without language prerequisites, attracting "non-language" students to a study of languages.

6. Students can take one-hour courses during the summer to bridge the time gap and, thus, minimize skill loss between spring and fall terms.

Since students can take courses in areas of their interest and at an appropriate level of difficulty for each, they do well, building their self-confidence and a positive feeling toward language study. If they like language study, they tend to do more of it.

And they tell their friends.

And the enrollment continues to grow.